

*Asks Administration to Send Temporary Assistance*

May 24, 2010

WASHINGTON D.C. – U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) has asked the federal government to prepare for the looming need for increased mental health services in south Louisiana. [In a letter](#) to the Administration sent late Friday, Congressman Melancon asked for assistance in establishing temporary mental services to help residents cope with the BP oil disaster in the Gulf. Congressman Melancon has hosted two recent town hall meetings in south Louisiana where he has heard from residents about the need for more mental health services.

“As you are aware, this area is currently suffering from its second disaster in less than five years---first from Hurricane Katrina and now due to the oil spill,” wrote Congressman Melancon.

“Residents in the 3rd Congressional district are starting to display symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.”

Congressman Melancon continued, “Adding to the seriousness of the situation is the lack of mental health services and providers available in this area. Any resources that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) can immediately offer would be of great assistance.”

In his letter, Congressman Melancon reiterated that BP should be held responsible for all costs for the recovery, including the additional mental health care services for south Louisiana.

“While I am requesting your assistance, I believe that BP and other companies involved should ultimately bear the costs of organizing and providing these health care services. It is the companies’ responsibility and theirs alone in light of their negligence in this situation.”

A signed final copy of Congressman Melancon’s letter can be viewed online [here](#).

Congressman Melancon has worked to bring federal attention to the health needs of Louisianians impacted by the oil leak in the Gulf. Last week, Congressman Melancon sent a letter to the Administration requesting [temporary health care clinics](#) to serve volunteers and workers in south Louisiana who have been affected by the oil leak. The clinics would provide medical checkups to people who have come in contact with the oil and assist in monitoring the health effects of the oil leak on south Louisianians.

Congressman Melancon has been leading efforts in Louisiana to coordinate the private, federal, state, and local response to the oil leak caused by the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform one month ago. He represents in Congress the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana’s Third Congressional District.

Congressman Melancon held a [town hall in Houma](#) last weekend to listen to constituent concerns about the oil leak disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and provide information about the

response efforts. Congressman Melancon invited representatives from the Coast Guard, BP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Small Business Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and officials from Terrebonne, Lafourche and St. Mary Parishes to take part in the town hall to help answer questions and listen to concerns.

Earlier this month, Congressman Melancon [organized a town hall in Chalmette](#) to share information with constituents about the oil disaster response efforts. Representatives from the Coast Guard, BP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana State University, Louisiana's seafood industry, and St. Bernard Parish officials answered questions and listened to concerns.

Congressman Melancon has been working closely with parish and federal officials to monitor response efforts and provide assistance where needed. Last weekend, he toured the coast along Terrebonne, Lafourche, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes by helicopter with U.S. Coast Guard Captain Edwin Stanton, the Federal Coordinating Officer for the disaster, and a representative from BP. They surveyed the impact of the oil leak from the Deepwater Horizon disaster on the coastline west of the Mississippi River.

Congressman Melancon has also [toured by boat](#) the coastal marshes in St. Bernard Parish with parish officials and viewed the efforts of local fishermen to deploy boom. He has also met with Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish officials and been briefed on their plans for boom deployment and other protective measures to prevent the oil sheen from damaging their coastal marshes. Over one million feet of protective boom have been deployed to protect Louisiana's fragile coastal marshes from the oil slick.

In his conversations with local fishermen and parish officials involved in laying the boom, Congressman Melancon learned they face a severe shortage in boom material, hindering their ability to protect the coast. In response, Congressman Melancon sent a letter to President Barack Obama [requesting military aircraft](#) be used to help bring protective boom to the Gulf Coast more quickly. The President granted his request and within a few days of receiving Congressman Melancon's letter, the first Air Force aircraft arrived in Belle Chasse with additional boom.

###